



Press Release

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National Shoe Fitting Week

Because of the highly positive feedback, the Society will be stepping up the promotion in 2014 and encouraging all I.F.R.A. members, C.F.H.R. members, Podiatrists and any other shop who would like to join in, to take part **w/c 12th April 2014** – the week prior to Easter. A participation form is available from the home page of the SSF website and can be found in trade magazines. Easter is a moveable feast but traditionally the time when journalists are running footwear P.R. as feet are coming out of boots into shoes and sandals. It's when people start to take stock of their feet and see what the ravages of the winter months have done to them.

The Council of the Society are thrilled that this year that they have the support of the Society of Chiropractors & Podiatrists. The **College of Chiropractors & Podiatrists is endorsing the event and will include their logo in the promotional campaign.** Their representative Nita Parmer said: ***"The College of Podiatry is pleased to support the Society of Shoe Fitters campaign as good footwear and fitting has an important role to play in foot health and well being."***

The Society knows that the public are suffering because of bad practice and badly constructed footwear and this uses valuable NHS resources because of related aches and pains (with over 11,000 podiatrists in the U.K. it should be obvious the industry needs to take the matter more seriously). The British Footwear Association and the Society of Shoe Fitters are busy answering desperate enquiries from the public on a weekly basis.

Those who joined in with National Shoe Fitting Week in 2013 really enjoyed the event and found that networking with both the footwear industry and other shops, clinics and schools in their area, garnered tremendous support and allowed them to educate their customers and show off their stock and their knowledge. Lots of S.S.F. members created innovative events i.e. Easter egg hunts with eggs in other shop windows, colouring competitions, fashion make-over evenings, foot pampering sessions, find the golden shoe etc. They also invited podiatrists, health visitors, reflexologists etc. into their shops to look at their footwear and to take part in the event, some of whom created talks, evenings and mini-clinics to promote their own businesses. Despite not having adverts in national newspapers, the effect of each shop throwing a pebble in the pool created a ripple that spread far and wide. The knock-on effect was that their local podiatrists have a contact that they feel happy to recommend and work with, and a better idea of the footwear available which may be suitable for orthotics, all adding to money in the till!

The S.S.F. is not anti-online sales. Many think that the S.S.F. is completely opposed to online selling, but we are realistic and know it is here to stay – most shops could not survive without it. It is not good because feet of any age should be monitored by experts and shoes fitted accordingly. **A foot is a three dimensional object and therefore length and widths are the basics of fitting. Even then a shoe may not fit correctly despite the size on the box and on the gauge.** We simply ask that retail shops are treated fairly, with respect and that it is a level playing ground. The public tend to think that it is cheaper to buy online and for some things it is, but footwear is special and children's shoes are usually only cheaper online if they are a season old. By the time they have paid p&p they may as well have bought instore with the correct service – which is free and many shops would sooner give a little discount than lose a customer. **Online websites selling children's shoes should carry a prominent government health warning advising parents that children's shoes should be professionally fitted.**

We asked the President of the S.S.F. Ellie Dickins in addition to the online sale of children's shoes, is there any other practice they feel is highly detrimental to foot health. Ellie said "There are hundreds of independent shops including the multiples, who are selling quality products but their staff only have a basic level of training. Lack of knowledge is expected in chainstores because of the staff turnover and products sold, but footwear multiples or independents should be better than that. Training is tax deductible, so the cost implication for giving a better level of training is not as high as they like to think". Ellie is passionate about adult footwear having a specialist shop in Hungerford, but at one point had a children's shop too. Ellie said "One of the worst things any of the suppliers has done is to sell Fitting Gauges to the public. This is like giving a Lotus car to a learner driver; the public buy one and think they know how to fit. They don't use it to buy the brand that supplied it; they use it to buy any cheap rubbish, or worse still hand-me-downs and second-hand shoes from charity shops. Yes you can buy scissors that cut hair, but they are not as good as hairdressing scissors and it is down to the skill of the person using them that counts. Parents came into my shop and thought they could tell me how to fit and what fitted their child best simply because they had watched videos online and had a gauge in their hand, and I know that a lot of our members are experiencing this. However once you ask them direct questions and show them they are wrong they are embarrassed and worried that they may have done damage to their children's feet, because most parents regardless of their financial or educational background don't want to harm their children and have bought the gauges not realising what else is involved. It is bad practice and shouldn't happen. The Society has its own gauges but would never sell them to anyone unless part of a training package".

Ellie said "Everyone should get behind National Shoe Fitting Week. The big companies should display posters; we all have a responsibility to keep a fitting service and quality footwear available. In this way the trade is supporting one another and the message will be far more prominent to young mums, some of whom are happy to spend money on computer games, designer labels, tattoos, hair extensions, nails etc. but are neglecting their children's feet.

Society Secretary said "Everyone is welcome to join us for National Shoe Fitting Week this is not just about the S.S.F., it is about keeping standards high within our industry. Shops can be sent posters and emailed PR, colouring competitions etc. or they can be downloaded from the National Shoe Fitting Week page of our website. Our logo is available as a PDF to download and promote the event online and we would appreciate everyone featuring it on their Facebook page and 'Tweeting' prior to the event...the number of people this could canvass would be phenomenal. Better still join us as a professional shoe fitter - for highly experienced Fitters with more than 5 years experience selling quality brands we have an Entrance Application, for those who know their knowledge of physiology, shoe manufacture and fit is not as good as it could be, we have our courses (next one starts March 1st). We can also create one day courses for multiple staff and are currently putting the final touches to a course that encompasses how the trade works for podiatrists. We work hard for our members and Associate Members at the same time helping hundreds of consumers annually; you have nothing to lose and everything to gain by working with us."

For more information about National Shoe Fitting Week go online: www.shoefitters-uk.org
or email: secretary@shoefitters-uk.org
or visit the SSF stand at MODA in February.